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Report of the Disarmament Commission for 2008

General Assembly

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Sixty-third Session
Supplement No. 42 (A/63/42)*

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I. Introduction

1. At its sixty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/54, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission", which reads as follows:

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Disarmament Commission,[1]

Recalling its resolutions 47/54 A of 9 December 1992, 47/54 G of 8 April 1993, 48/77 A of 16 December 1993, 49/77 A of 15 December 1994, 50/72 D of 12 December 1995, 51/47 B of 10 December 1996, 52/40 B of 9 December 1997, 53/79 A of 4 December 1998, 54/56 A of 1 December 1999, 55/35 C of 20 November 2000, 56/26 A of 29 November 2001, 57/95 of 22 November 2002, 58/67 of 8 December 2003, 59/105 of 3 December 2004, 60/91 of 8 December 2005 and 61/98 of 6 December 2006,

Considering the role that the Disarmament Commission has been called upon to play and the contribution that it should make in examining and submitting recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and in the promotion of the implementation of the relevant decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Disarmament Commission;[1]

2. *Reaffirms* the validity of its decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998, concerning the efficient functioning of the Disarmament Commission;

3. *Recalls* its resolution 61/98, by which it adopted additional measures for improving the effectiveness of the Commission's methods of work;

4. *Reaffirms* the mandate of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues;

5. *Also reaffirms* the importance of further enhancing the dialogue and cooperation among the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament;

6. *Requests* the Disarmament Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate, as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly,[2] and with paragraph 3 of Assembly resolution 37/78 H of 9 December 1982, and to that end to make every effort to achieve specific recommendations on the items on its agenda, taking into account the adopted "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission";[3]

7. *Recommends* that the Disarmament Commission continue the consideration of the following items at its 2008 substantive session:

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 42* (A/62/42).

[2] Resolution S-10/2.

[3] A/CN.10/137.

(a) Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons;

(b) Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons;

8. *Requests* the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2008, namely from 7 to 24 April, and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to transmit to the Disarmament Commission the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament,[4] together with all the official records of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly relating to disarmament matters, and to render all assistance that the Commission may require for implementing the present resolution;

10. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure full provision to the Disarmament Commission and its subsidiary bodies of interpretation and translation facilities in the official languages and to assign, as a matter of priority, all the necessary resources and services, including verbatim records, to that end;

11. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission".

II. Organization and work of the 2008 substantive session

2. The Disarmament Commission held its organizational session for 2008 at United Nations Headquarters at its 283rd plenary meeting, on 18 March 2008 (see A/CN.10/PV.283). At that meeting, the Commission considered questions related to the organization of work and substantive agenda items for its 2008 substantive session in accordance with the adopted "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission" (A/CN.10/137) and in the light of General Assembly resolution 62/54. The Commission took up the question of the election of its officers, taking into account the principle of rotation of the chairmanship among the geographic regions. The Commission considered the provisional agenda for the 2008 substantive session and decided to establish a committee of the whole and two working groups to deal with the two substantive items on the agenda.

3. At the same meeting, the Commission took note of its provisional agenda, contained in document A/CN.10/L.57, which read:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Organization of work.
4. Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.
5. Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 27* (A/62/27).

6. Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.[5]

7. Other business.

4. The Commission also approved its general programme of work for the session (A/CN.10/2008/CRP.1) and decided to allocate four meetings to a general exchange of views.

5. The Commission met at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 24 April 2008. In the course of its session, the Commission held seven plenary meetings (see A/CN.10/PV.283-289) under the chairmanship of Piet de Klerk (Netherlands). Timur Alasaniya, Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, served as the Secretary of the Commission, and Ioan Tudor, Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, represented the substantive secretariat.

6. During the 2008 session, the Bureau of the Commission was constituted as follows:

Chairman: Piet de Klerk (Netherlands)

Vice-Chairmen: representatives of Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Croatia, France, Peru, Philippines and Uzbekistan

Rapporteur: Mónica Bolaños-Pérez (Guatemala)

7. The Commission also elected Carlos Perez of Brazil Chairman of Working Group II, on item 5.

8. On 7 and 8 April, the Disarmament Commission held a general exchange of views on all agenda items (see A/CN.10/PV.284-287). The representatives of the following countries made statements during the general exchange of views: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo (on behalf of African States), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mexico (on behalf of the Rio Group), Egypt, India, Indonesia (on behalf of States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement), Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Slovenia (on behalf of the European Union), Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic (on behalf of the Arab States) and United Republic of Tanzania.

9. At the first meeting of the substantive session (284th plenary), on 7 April, the Commission heard a statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon.

10. Pursuant to paragraph 3 (e) of resolution 61/98, on the report of the Disarmament Commission, in which the General Assembly encouraged the Commission to invite, as appropriate, experts on disarmament for discussions at its plenary meetings, the Chairman of the Commission, assisted by the Bureau, conducted a number of informal consultations with the membership on a procedural

[5] The agenda was adopted for the three-year cycle covering the sixty-first to sixty-third sessions of the General Assembly.

framework and organizational elements for the possible participation of experts in the work of the Commission.

11. At its Committee of the Whole meeting (288th meeting), on 24 April, the Chairman presented an informal paper on participation of experts.

12. In accordance with the decision taken at its organizational session, the Commission entrusted Working Group I with the mandate of dealing with agenda item 4, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". Working Group I met under the chairmanship of Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou (Benin) and held informal pre-session consultations on 18 March 2008, as well as a number of informal meetings during the session and 12 formal meetings between 9 and 24 April.

13. The Commission entrusted Working Group II with the mandate of dealing with agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". Working Group II met under the chairmanship of Carlos Perez (Brazil) and held 10 meetings between 9 and 22 April.

14. In accordance with the past practice of the Disarmament Commission, some non-governmental organizations attended the plenary meetings.

III. Documentation

A. Documents submitted by the Secretary-General

15. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 62/54, the Secretary-General, by a note dated 4 March 2008, transmitted to the Disarmament Commission the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, together with all the official records of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly relating to disarmament matters (see A/CN.10/205).

B. Other documents, including documents submitted by Member States

16. In the course of the Commission's work, the documents listed below, dealing with substantive questions, were submitted:

(a) Two working papers submitted by the Chairman of Working Group I (A/CN.10/2008/WG.I/WP.1 and Rev.1);

(b) Three conference room papers submitted by the Chairman of Working Group II (A/CN.10/2008/WG.II/CRP.1 and Rev.1 and 2).

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

17. At its 289th plenary meeting, on 24 April, the Disarmament Commission adopted by consensus the reports of its subsidiary bodies regarding agenda items 4 and 5. The Commission agreed to submit the texts of those reports, reproduced below, to the General Assembly.

18. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the Chairman's proposal on procedural and organizational elements for the possible participation of experts in the work of the Commission and decided to continue the consideration of this issue in the future.

19. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted, as a whole, its report to be presented to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

20. The report of Working Group I reads as follows:

Report of Working Group I on agenda item 4

1. At its organizational session, held at its 283rd plenary meeting, on 18 March 2008, the Disarmament Commission adopted the agenda for its 2008 substantive session (A/CN.10/L.57) and decided to allocate agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", to Working Group I.

2. Working Group I, chaired by Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou (Benin), held informal consultations on 18 March 2008 and 12 formal meetings, from 9 to 11, 14 to 18 and 21 to 24 April 2008. The Chairman also conducted a number of further informal consultations with various delegations and regional groups. Sergei Cherniavsky of the Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, served as Secretary of Working Group I. Curtis Raynold and Kristin Jenssen of the Office for Disarmament Affairs served as advisers to Working Group I.

3. In connection with its work, Working Group I had before it a working paper submitted by the Chairman of the Working Group on 25 March 2008 (A/CN.10/2008/WG.I/WP.1), which was circulated to all delegations 10 days before the start of the 2008 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

4. At the 1st and 2nd meetings, on 9 and 10 April 2008, delegations exchanged views on the methods of work of the Working Group and made various proposals in this regard.

5. At its 2nd meeting, on 10 April 2008, following further exchange of views and on the basis of informal consultations, the Working Group decided to continue further discussion of the agenda item on the basis of the working paper submitted by the Chairman of the Working Group.

6. At its 3rd to 7th meetings, on 11 and from 14 to 17 April 2008, the Working Group held a focused discussion on specific elements contained in the Chairman's working paper (A/CN.10/2008/WG.I/WP.1) and on a number of written and oral proposals made by delegations.

7. At the 7th meeting, on 17 April 2008, on the basis of extensive discussions and informal consultations among members of the Working Group, the Chairman presented to the Group a revised working paper, containing elements that, in his view, could serve as a basis for further discussions to reach a consensus on the recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

8. At the 8th to 11th meetings, on 18 and from 21 to 23 April, delegations made various proposals and exchanged views to bridge their respective positions in search of consensus language for the Chairman's revised working paper.

9. At the 12th meeting, on 24 April, on the basis of an analysis of those discussions and considerations, the Chairman submitted a final revision of his working paper (A/CN.10/2008/WG.I/WP.1/Rev.1). The Group considered the Chairman's revised working paper but was unable to achieve a consensus on it. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Chairman and the Secretariat.

10. At the same meeting, the Working Group considered and adopted by consensus its report on agenda item 4.

21. The report of Working Group II reads as follows:

Report of Working Group II on agenda item 5

1. At its organizational session (283rd meeting), on 18 March 2008, the Disarmament Commission took note of its agenda for the 2008 substantive session (A/CN.10/L.57) and decided to allocate to Working Group II agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

2. The Working Group, under the chairmanship of Carlos Perez (Brazil), held 10 meetings from 9 to 11, from 14 to 18 and on 21 and 22 April. Christa Giles of the Disarmament and Peace Affairs Branch, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, served as the Secretary of the Working Group, and Pamela Maponga of the Office for Disarmament Affairs served as adviser to the Working Group.

3. At the 1st meeting of Working Group II, on 9 April 2008, the Chairman circulated a conference room paper (A/CN.10/2008/WG.II/CRP.1). At the same meeting, the Working Group took up the Chairman's conference room paper as a basis for discussion and began a first reading of the text. The Chairman's paper was based on the text of the previous Chairman's working paper (A/CN.10/2007/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.5), which constituted an updated version of the Chairman's working paper attached to the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2003.[6]

4. From its 2nd meeting, on 10 April, the Working Group engaged in substantive discussions and consultations on the Chairman's conference room paper. During that period, written and oral proposals were made by delegations.

5. At the 6th meeting, on 16 April, the Chairman submitted a revised version of his paper (A/CN.10/2008/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.1) to include proposals and changes made by delegations during the deliberations. The Chairman's paper did not include the annex.

6. At the 8th meeting, on 18 April, the revised annex to the Chairman's paper, was submitted.

[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 42* (A/58/42).

7. At its 10th meeting, on 22 April, the Working Group considered the latest version of the Chairman's conference room paper (A/CN.10/2008/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.2), entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", but was unable to reach a consensus on it. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Chairman, the Secretariat and the other members of the Bureau of the Working Group.

8. At the same meeting, the Working Group also considered and adopted by consensus its report on agenda item 5.

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